

Spectrum



Photos by Siobhan Carlile

Holly Petraeus (standing) visits with attendees during the recent Senior Leaders Luncheon at the Gordon Club August 28.

Military line offers priceless advice



Lt. Col. Jon Fox, 442nd Signal Battalion, looks over his consumer knowledge quiz.

Siobhan Carlile
Signal Staff

Not many successful high profile women would admit that her first piece of furniture with her new husband was a foosball table, or that she and her husband signed a lease for an apartment sight unseen, or that they bought a foreign convertible that gave them nothing but mechanical problems. But Holly Petraeus did.

Petraeus is not only a military spouse of 34 years, married to Army General David Petraeus, she is also the Director of the Better Business Bureau Military Line which offers consumer assistance for military personnel and their Families. During her visit to Fort Gordon August 28 and her presentation to Soldiers at Alexander Hall she wanted to make the point that she too was young once and made some financial decisions that she later regretted.

Her advice? Check out the BBB Military Line and check out any businesses you might want to patronize. On websites look for the BBB logo, if that logo doesn't link you to the BBB website then that business is not a validated website. She warns against being overconfident on websites, they could have the most sophisticated graphics and look great but be fraudulent. That old adage if it sounds or looks too good to be true it probably is, rings true, she said.

Chief Warrant Officer Shawn Petermann, a student in the Warrant Officer Basic Course, who attended the presentation said, "Most of our community is very naïve when it comes to making consumer purchases."

"What I'll take away from today's talk is the fact that the Better Business Bureau is even more active with the military and making sure that our population is aware of what goes on...and



Better Business Bureaus are not-for-profit organizations serving the public interest by promoting ethical business practices in the marketplace. Look for this logo when looking up businesses on the Internet. When you click on their logo it should take you to the BBB website. If it doesn't, that business is not verified by the BBB.

the prevalence of scams. The internet makes it harder to validate if it's a real deal or if it's a scam and today's briefing will hopefully educate our Soldiers," he said.

Petraeus also made a presentation to the Senior Leaders luncheon to inform them of what the BBB Military Line has to offer and what to look out for when shopping online, how to protect against Identity theft and some of the most recent scams.

"The chamber's job (city chambers of commerce) is to keep the apple nice and shiny. The BBB's job is to keep out the worms," Petraeus said. "We're interested in ethics, in businesses being trustworthy," she said. Businesses can't be in the BBB by writing a check, they have to meet certain criteria and be accredited by the BBB."

A longtime friend of Petraeus, Beth Foley said, "I'm so not surprised to see her leaning forward the way she is and embracing this effort to ensure that our Soldiers and their Families and our military is being taken care of...she's a great American and I think we're in better hands knowing she's leading this effort."

Foley mentioned that she herself had endured almost two years of struggle to regain her good name after an identity theft rocked her world about ten years ago, demonstrating that it can happen to anyone. "After almost two years I finally got my name cleared, but it's a process that makes you feel that you've done something illegal...to know that we have an advocate with Holly and the way she is going throughout our country and our military to embrace them, hopefully they won't experience what I've experienced.

"No matter how smart you are how well educated you are, no matter how well you manage your money you can easily be a victim," said Diane Sarber of the Army Community Service. It definitely pays to stay informed. Visit the BBB Military Line at www.bbb.org/military



BBB Military Line

As a partner in the Department of Defense Financial Readiness Campaign, BBB Military Line® brings BBB services to military members and their Families. BBB Military Line has Memoranda of Understanding with the Army, Navy, Air Force and Marine Corps, and reaches service members across the United States through local BBBs, as well as offering special military Web pages. BBB Military Line has worked with the American Forces Information Service to produce this Public Service Announcement that is airing on military television channels worldwide.

BBB is a partner in the Department of Defense Financial Readiness Campaign. BBB Military Line offers a variety of free consumer services and materials to military personnel (including Reservists and National Guard), retirees, DoD civilians and their Families.

The website offers several resources to include:

- BBB Military Line Hot Topics** - Stay current with articles for today's military consumer plus the SGT Shopper column from Military Times.
- BBB Military Line e-Newsletter** - A monthly newsletters with information that will help you be a smarter consumer and teach you to avoid scams.
- Helpful Links** - This section includes links to various military and consumer oriented sites.

Chief Warrant Officer Shawn Petermann, 442nd Signal Battalion talks with Sgt. James Goodner, 447th Signal Battalion at Alexander Hall.